



US-Japan Alliance Digest

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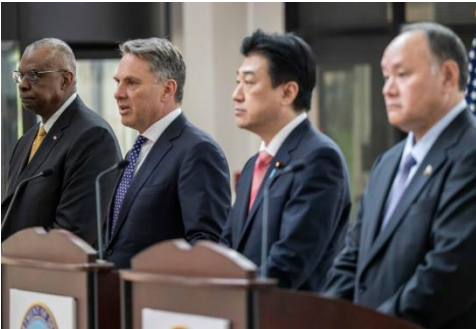


Image Source: [DOD](#)

Headlines:

- US-Japan-Australia-Philippines defense chiefs meet in Honolulu
- Guam-based US Navy surveillance drones to operate from Okinawa
- Allies to co-develop hypersonic missile intercept weapons system
- Japan enacts laws for joint SDF command/new clearance system
- Japan lawmaker seeks “return” by US of unused Senkaku Islands

Details:

- Secretary Austin [hosted](#) the defense ministers of Japan, Australia and the Philippines at US Indo-Pacific Command HQ Camp Smith in Honolulu on May 2, **for the second-ever meeting of the four defense chiefs**. In a wide-ranging statement, the defense chiefs [expressed](#) serious concerns about the situation in the East and South China Seas, [reiterated](#) opposition against attempts to change the status quo by force, and pledged to deepen cooperation with each other and regional partners. The meeting follows quadrilateral maritime [exercises](#) in the South China Sea in April & the [signing](#) of a trilateral maritime info warfare cooperation memorandum by the US-Japan-Australia this past week.
- Kadena Air Force base in **Okinawa will receive two Guam-based US Navy surveillance drones** that will [operate](#) in Japan’s southwestern islands until the fall. The MQ-4C Triton can [operate](#) from an altitude of 50,000 feet for up to 24 hours. The redeployment comes just six months after eight MQ-9 Reaper drones of the 319th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron were also [sent](#) to Kadena to [monitor](#) China’s regional maritime assertiveness.
- **The US and Japan [signed](#) an agreement on May 15 to co-develop weapons systems to intercept hypersonic missiles.** The allies first [announced](#) the collaboration at Camp David last year to develop Glide Phase Interceptors (GPI), known to be an effective counter to hypersonics. In a [statement](#), the DOD said, “GPI will deliver a regional defensive capability and build upon long-standing US-Japan missile defense cooperation and strengthen alliance deterrence posture.” Japan’s MOD [emphasized](#), “strengthening interception capabilities against them [hypersonics] is an urgent issue.”
- Japan's parliament on May 10 [enacted](#) revised laws to set up a **joint operational command (J-JOC) headquarters for the Self-Defense Forces' three services by the end of March 2025**. The J-JOC will [likely](#) be housed inside the Defense Ministry in Ichigaya with about 240 staff members and led by a 4-star commander. The US is [considering](#) a stronger command presence in Japan to be an effective counterpart for the J-JOC. The Diet also [passed](#) on May 10 a law to create a new security clearance system that allows the government to classify certain information on economic security grounds and extend clearances to private sector employees. The law could facilitate alliance information sharing about cyber threats or regarding collaborative research for emerging technologies.
- At a May 14 Upper House Diet Defense Committee meeting, Hon. Shigefumi Matsuzawa of the Japan Innovation Party [proposed](#) the government request the US to “return” to Japan a small part of the Senkaku Islands that it has [leased](#) for military training since 1958. The US military [used](#) a part of the Senkaku Islands (Kuba & Taisho islets) as a bombing/firing target until 1978, when the Navy was [reportedly](#) told by the US government to suspend such practice. Matsuzawa proposed either requesting the US to hold joint military exercises with Japan if the US wants to keep its lease or give control back to Japan. Defense Minister Kihara said he would consider the proposal, but action is not expected, in order to avoid exacerbating diplomatic tensions with China & Taiwan over the islands for minimal gain.